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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Letter dated 16 October 1996 from the Representative and Ambassador of Canada to the United Nations for Disarmament addressed to the Secretary-General

On 5 October 1996, the 50 participating States of the Ottawa International Strategy Conference: "Towards a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines", endorsed an Ottawa Declaration, calling for the earliest possible conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines. The Ottawa Conference also developed an action plan outlining the many concrete activities which States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations are willing to undertake towards this goal. The Ottawa Declaration and the Chairman's Agenda for Action are contained in annexes I and II, respectively.

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and the annexed Conference documentation could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 71.

(Signed) Mark MOHER
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ANNEX I

[Original: English and French]

Towards a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines

DECLARATION OF THE OTTAWA CONFERENCE

Following consultations with relevant international agencies, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, the States represented at the Ottawa Conference, the "Ottawa Group", have agreed to enhance cooperation and coordination of efforts on the basis of the following concerns and goals with respect to anti-personnel mines:

1. A recognition that the extreme humanitarian and socio-economic costs associated with the use of anti-personnel mines requires urgent action on the part of the international community to ban and eliminate this type of weapon.

2. A conviction that until such a ban is achieved, States must work to encourage universal adherence to the prohibitions or restrictions on anti-personnel mines as contained in the amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

3. An affirmation of the need to convince mine-affected States to halt all new deployments of anti-personnel mines to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of mine-clearance operations.

4. A recognition that the international community must provide significantly greater resources to mine-awareness programmes, mine-clearance operations and victim assistance.

5. A commitment to work together to ensure:

- The earliest possible conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines;

- Progressive reductions in new deployments of anti-personnel mines with the urgent objective of halting all new deployments of anti-personnel mines;

- Support for a resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations at its fifty-first session, calling upon Member States, inter alia, to implement national moratoriums, bans or other restrictions, particularly on the operational use and transfer of anti-personnel mines at the earliest possible date;

- Regional and subregional activities in support of a global ban on anti-personnel mines; and

- A follow-on conference hosted by Belgium in June 1997 to review the progress of the international community in achieving a global ban on anti-personnel mines.

ANNEX II

[Original: English and French]

Towards a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines

International Strategy Conference, Ottawa, 3-5 October 1996

CHAIRMAN'S AGENDA FOR ACTION ON ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES

Participants in the Ottawa Conference have reaffirmed their commitments to seek the earliest possible conclusion of a legally binding agreement to ban the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines. This agreement will be achieved most rapidly through increased cooperation within the international community.

The purpose of the Ottawa Conference was to catalyse practical efforts to move towards a ban and create partnerships between States, international organizations and agencies and non-governmental organizations essential to building the necessary political will to achieve a global ban on anti-personnel mines.

The following Agenda for Action captures the dynamism of the discussions in Ottawa and the recognition that movement towards a global ban has already begun and details concrete activities to be undertaken by the international community on an immediate and urgent basis, to build upon the Ottawa Declaration and to move this process ahead in preparation for the follow-up meeting which will be hosted by Belgium in 1997.

This Agenda for Action reflects the interrelationship of the global ban, mine-clearance and victim assistance agendas. It highlights the need to reach out beyond the already committed to engage the broader international community in the global ban effort. It also recognizes that action must be taken at the global, regional, subregional and national levels to achieve a rapid global ban on anti-personnel mines.

A. Global action

Building the necessary political will for a new legally binding international agreement banning anti-personnel mines will require more nations to adopt national bans or moratoriums on the production, stockpiling, use and transfer of anti-personnel mines. Nations which are not anti-personnel mine producers should also consider adopting bans on the imports of anti-personnel mines.

These actions will also have the effect of reducing the total number of new deployments of anti-personnel mines, deployments which would create new victims and increase the costs of mine-clearance operations.

Global actions suggested by participants in this conference include:

1. The passage of a resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations at its fifty-first session, promoting an international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines.

Recognizing that a key vehicle for building international support for a global ban will be the development of overwhelming support for the resolution being proposed by the United States of America at the current session of the General Assembly, the following activities were identified as key opportunities to develop political support for the resolution:

- "Potential co-sponsors" meeting, 10 October 1996, New York (4 p.m., United Nations Secretariat, Conference Room 9);

- Inter-Parliamentary Union Meeting at the United Nations, 22 October 1996;

- Parliamentarians for Global Action, Annual General Meeting, October, New York;

- Landmine Panel, NGO Committee on Disarmament, 24 October, New York;

- Work in regional or subregional groupings, as well as bilaterally, to build support for the resolution.

2. Building public awareness and political will for a global anti-personnel mine ban.

Building increased public awareness of the social, economic and human costs of anti-personnel mines is essential to develop and sustain the necessary political will for a global anti-personnel mine ban. Opportunities for building political will and public awareness include:

- Launch of the Machel Study in response to General Assembly resolution 48/157 of 20 December 1993 on the impact of armed conflict (and landmines) on children, New York, at the United Nations, and by Archbishop Tutu in South Africa, 11 November 1996;

- Adoption of the Machel Report by the General Assembly and implementation of its recommendations;

- Reports on progress in the development of national anti-personnel mines policies in national reporting on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the Geneva-based Committee on the Rights of the Child;

- Engaging military experts in the study of the military utility/humanitarian costs of anti-personnel mine use;

- Adding the anti-personnel mine issue to the agenda of appropriate United Nations forums.

3. Encouraging rapid entry into force and universal adherence to the prohibitions and restrictions on anti-personnel mines as contained in the amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

4. Increased exchanges of information and data on anti-personnel mines and national anti-personnel mine policies to build the confidence and transparency necessary for rapid progress towards a global anti-personnel mine ban, including:

- The development and publication of a global database on national anti-personnel mine policies (to be circulated by Canada in the fall of 1996);

- Studies by experts on the international production and legal and illicit trade of anti-personnel mines.

5. To lay the necessary groundwork for a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines, Austria will produce a first draft and Canada will produce a possible framework for the verification of such an agreement.

6. Suggested follow-up conferences to the Ottawa Conference include:

- Belgium, June 1997;

- Norway, Germany, Switzerland;

- A Ministerial meeting to be held in Canada no later than December 1997 to sign a treaty banning the production, transfer, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel mines.

B. Regional action

Actions at the subregional and regional levels will be instrumental in catalysing the development of political will for a global ban on anti-personnel mines. To build upon the recent decision by the Central American Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs to ban the production, use and trade in anti-personnel mines, thus creating the world's first regional anti-personnel mine-free zone, participants in the Conference suggested the following actions:

Increased funding for mine clearance and victim assistance for those regions and subregions which have taken concrete steps to create anti-personnel mine-free zones.

Within Africa

- Efforts to enhance the demining capacities of African countries with priority given to heavily mine-affected countries. This will include a Conference of African Experts in Demining and Assistance to Victims of Landmines (1997);

- Meetings to engage military/national security experts on anti-personnel mines issues at the subregional level - including a seminar organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in southern Africa (1997);

- Fourth International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) Conference on Landmines: Towards a Mine-Free [Southern] Africa, 25-28 February 1997, Maputo;

- Work towards the implementation of the three-part programme of the Inter-African Union of Human Rights.

Within Asia

- Meetings to engage military/national security experts on anti-personnel mines issues at the subregional level - including a planned ICRC/Philippines seminar (proposed for the first half of 1997);

- ICBL Conference, 1998;

- Work towards consideration of anti-personnel mine issues within the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) framework, including an ARF inter-sessional meeting on demining for United Nations peacekeepers, to be held in New Zealand in March/April 1997.

Within the Americas

- Meeting of Ministers of Defence of the Americas, Bariloche, Argentina, 6-9 October, to seek support for follow-up to the Organization of American States (OAS) resolution on "The western hemisphere as an antipersonnel landmine-free zone";

- Special meeting at the end of October or early November 1996 of the OAS Committee on Hemispheric Security to promote implementation of OAS General Assembly resolution on "The western hemisphere as an anti-personnel landmine-free zone", including:

  - Information exchanges on national anti-personnel mine policies;

  - Provision of information to establish a hemispheric anti-personnel mine registry;

- Regional ICBL Conference, fall 1997;

- Possible discussion in the Rio Group on anti-personnel mines under the topic of conventional arms control;

- Meetings to engage military authorities on anti-personnel mines issues at the regional and subregional levels;

- Inclusion of anti-personnel landmines trade in discussions on illicit traffic in arms;

- Encouraging development of regimes of confidence-building measures to replace anti-personnel mines in border areas.

Within Europe

- Implementation by the European Union (EU) of the joint action on anti-personnel mines adopted by the EU on 1 October 1996, in which the EU clearly asserts its determination to pursue the total elimination of anti-personnel mines. To this end:

  - The EU will pursue efforts to ensure full implementation of the results of the Review Conference of the 1980 Convention on the one hand, and support for international efforts to ban anti-personnel mines on the other hand;

  - The EU is committed to the goal of the total elimination of anti-personnel mines and shall work actively towards the achievement at the earliest possible date of an effective international agreement to ban these weapons worldwide;

  - The EU shall seek to raise without delay the issue of a total ban in the most appropriate international forum;

  - The States members of the EU shall implement a common moratorium on the export of all anti-personnel mines to all destinations and shall refrain from issuing new licences for the transfer of technology to enable the manufacture of anti-personnel mines in third countries;

  - EU member States shall endeavour to implement national restrictions or bans additional to those contained in Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons;

  - The EU will reinforce its contribution to international mine clearance. A budget of 7 million ECU is to be provided for initiatives to be launched in the period up to the end of 1997, in the form of contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for assistance in mine clearance and/or specific EU actions providing assistance for mine clearance in response to the request of a regional organization or a third country's authorities. In addition, the Commission of the European Communities intends to continue the Community's support for activity in the field of mine clearance in the context of humanitarian aid, reconstruction and development cooperation;

- The EU will invite the Associate countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Associate countries Cyprus and Malta and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries members of the European Economic

Area to align themselves with initiatives taken in pursuit of the aims of its joint action;

- Support will be sought within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for participating States to work towards a ban on all anti-personnel mines as soon as possible;

- In addition, other European countries:

  - Have taken concrete steps in terms of destroying their stocks of anti-personnel mines or have made decisions to do so within a specific time-frame;

  - Are introducing national legal regulations prohibiting exports and imports of anti-personnel mines and their components;

  - Are strengthening their capacity to carry out demining activities;

  - Are making contributions to strengthen the ability of United Nations to initiate and coordinate demining activities in other regions;

  - In the field of developing demining technology, Norway has started a pilot mine-clearance programme in the former Yugoslavia utilizing a new mechanical mine-clearance machine.

C. Landmine clearance, mine awareness and victim assistance

Delegates highlighted the need to take special action to deal with the humanitarian crisis caused by anti-personnel mines, while recognizing that without a ban, mine-clearance and victim assistance programmes will always be insufficient to deal with the crisis.

In this regard, in addition to the announcement of many States of increased financial commitments to clearance, awareness and assistance efforts, the following specific initiatives and ideas were discussed to foster international technical cooperation and to make further progress to improve and share mine-clearance technology, equipment and expertise; to improve mine-awareness efforts and to enhance victim assistance programmes. These initiatives include:

- Meeting of Technical Experts on Demining Technology in preparation for the Tokyo meeting, Germany, early 1997;

- Development of Canadian capacities in humanitarian demining and assistance to victims, Winnipeg, Canada, early 1997;

- Demining and victim assistance, Tokyo, March 1997;

- Cooperation on victim assistance (Canada-Mexico and Cuban/South African offer of their expertise);

- Increased international cooperation in anti-personnel mine stockpile destruction;

- Efforts to develop standard procedures for mines awareness education;

- Including consideration of humanitarian mine clearance within peace accords;

- Strengthening the efforts by Central America to achieve a landmine-free zone by the year 2000;

- Establishment of a centre at James Madison University to act as a database to assist in coordinating international demining efforts;

- Submission by the Presidency of the European Union of a resolution of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on assistance with mine clearance.

In addition to the above, a number of countries indicated that other events are being planned and that appropriate details will soon be forthcoming.